

SCOTTISH HOME AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Local Authority Records

REPORT BY A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR SCOTLAND



EDINBURGH
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1967
PRICE 2s. 6d. NET



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G. S. Thomson, Esq.

Secretary

J. H. Sime, Esq.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To examine the arrangements for the custody, preservation and destruction of local authority records in Scotland and to make recommendations.

NOTE: The estimated cost of preparing and publishing this Report is £273 15s. 0d. of which £122 3s. 3d. represents the cost of printing and publication.

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TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM ROSS, M.B.E., M.P.,
Secretary of State for Scotland.

SIR,

We were appointed by you on 15th October, 1965 as a committee:

"to examine the arrangements for the custody, preservation and destruction of local authority records in Scotland and to make recommendations."

We now have the honour to present our report.

We have held six meetings. In order to assist our enquiries we made known our terms of reference to the general public by means of advertisements and publicity in the national press and we also invited those whom we thought most interested in our subject to submit observations on any aspect of our remit. We should like to express our thanks to all those who submitted evidence, a list of whose names is given in Appendix A. It was decided that the written material received was sufficient to enable us to come to definite conclusions without the necessity of hearing oral evidence.

CHAPTER ONE

Terms of Reference

1. We have given careful consideration to the scope of our terms of reference. These terms referred to "local authority records" and if interpreted narrowly would be confined to the records actually created by local authorities. We were aware, however, that existing local authorities have in many cases inherited records from previous bodies now defunct and have in some cases acquired records which were not in origin local authority records at all. We were also conscious that there were many classes of records which though not created by local authorities were essentially local in character or origin and which might therefore be considered as suitable for local custody. In particular we have had before us the report of the Committee under the chairmanship of Sheriff Kidd* which has concurrently been considering the question of Sheriff Court records and we note that this committee has recommended that "record policy in respect of Sheriff Court records should be directed generally towards local preservation". In these circumstances we have considered it only realistic to direct our enquiries towards finding a solution which is capable, if required, of dealing with all classes of records which are of local character or origin however created. We do not consider it the function of the present committee however to decide what particular categories of records fall under this head.

CHAPTER TWO

Background

THE PROBLEMS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

2. The Committee's terms of reference give rise to two primary considerations—first the need of facilities for the secure archival control and storage of local authority records and for public access to them and secondly the need for some system for the selective review of modern records.

3. We believe that the basic facilities of storage and public access are amply warranted by the potential demand both from academic students present and future and from the general public and by the needs of the authorities themselves. The evidence to justify this statement must be in a measure speculative. For in the absence of facilities there can be no concrete figures of usage and experience shows that records like other things require to be advertised and made readily available before a demand can emerge. Thus there was virtually no demand for access to the records of the Secretary of State's departments until they began to be trans-

* Report on Sheriff Court Records.

mitted to the Scottish Record Office some two years ago. Yet in the quarter ended 30th September, 1966, these records accounted for over a thousand productions in the Historical Search Room of the Scottish Record Office. Similarly during 1966 the Glasgow City archives were used over 300 times by research workers, this usage dating almost entirely from the establishment of the City Record Office in 1964. Nevertheless we consider that there are certain clear lines of potential usage which we examine in the following paragraphs. We examine them in some detail because we believe the answers to the question why records are kept may in a great measure provide the answer to the questions how and where they should be kept.

4. The value of local authority records for academic studies cannot in our opinion be questioned. The history and development of local government is a subject worthy of study and these records represent the primary source from which that history must be written. These records are also a primary source for the general history of local areas and communities and the extent of academic interest in such local studies is illustrated by the fact that during the year 1966 one-third of the new readers in the Historical Search Room of the Scottish Record Office were engaged on local studies.

5. Irrespective of any academic demand there is clear evidence of a rising interest in local history in all classes of the community. One county librarian has recently disclosed that the local history collections are now the most used non-fiction class in his library* and the magnificent collections of works on local history in many libraries reflect an increasing demand by people of all walks of life to know more about the place and community in which they live. It could be argued that the principal usage of records will always arise from academic sources and not from the general public whose interests will tend to be confined to printed material. On the other hand the Scottish Record Office have argued on the basis of their considered and accumulated experience that records can profitably be consulted by "the man in the street" and that it requires no special academic skill to use them. They have in fact quoted several instances where valuable work has been done upon the records by amateurs possessing no academic background or qualifications. And the County Archivist of Essex has cited the school children who use his office in considerable numbers† (see paragraph 7) as having "proved that there is no technical limitation to the kind of original material which they are capable of studying."

6. Further we believe that if records were made available they could play a valuable part both in adult education and in the schools. The County librarian of Orkney who already has a substantial record holding in his library is currently making use of these records in further education classes and he proposes in the near future to extend this experiment by allowing further education students to undertake research projects under his direction. This could in time lead to the development of a school of local historians. And even if the majority of those who take such classes do not progress to independent research the experience they have gained in using original material themselves will give them an informed and critical insight into the printed sources which only a direct knowledge of the techniques of using primary sources can bring.

7. Certain English education authorities have made extensive use of records in the schools. The Kent Education authority have for some years attached sufficient

* D. Donaldson, *A Bibliography of the works of William Cramond*, 1965, p. v.

† F. G. Emmison, *Royal Progress. The Essex Record Office 1956-61*, 1962 p. 9.

importance to this class of work to second a teacher whole time to the County Record Office. Under a Pupils' Research Scheme in the County of Essex 104 pupils from 22 schools paid 1093 visits to the County Record Office in 1961. This was exclusive of school visits for sight-seeing and exhibition purposes. Little use has been made of records in Scottish schools except for some in the Edinburgh area to whom the facilities of the Scottish Record Office are readily accessible. We believe that particularly in the fields of history and geography the use of records would be ideally suited to two modern trends in Scottish educational policy. Firstly the traditional methods of teaching—the class lesson and the text book—are increasingly giving way to methods whereby the pupil is expected to seek and evaluate his own information.† Secondly in both history and geography increasing emphasis is being laid on the study of the "home area" as the field where the pupil's interest can be aroused most readily and where he can most easily secure information himself.*

8. Parallel to the needs of the research worker of whatever class are the needs of the local authorities themselves. Information of lasting administrative and legal value is recorded in local authority records. This justifies both the careful preservation of the records and the provision of means whereby the information which they contain can be readily located whenever it is required. A number of English local record offices have cited the services which they have given to their authorities in this respect. The City Archives of Glasgow has already proved most valuable to its administration in that in 1966 it has dealt with over 40 official enquiries. The Scottish Record Office have found that in several cases government departments have not realised the value or even the existence of many of their records until they have been transmitted to the Scottish Record Office and listed. We believe this will be not less true of local authorities.

† "Other environmental subjects such as history and geography have in the past been too much associated merely with the acquisition of facts and too little with the development of the child's powers of investigation . . . The study of these subjects should involve the pupil in finding information for himself, evaluating the information he obtains . . ." *Primary Education in Scotland* (1965) p. 62.

"There are other methods of acquiring information in geography which are likely to promote greater interest and activity among the pupils. In particular, they should be allowed and encouraged to procure more of the information for themselves. In the study of the Home Area, for instance, the bulk of the information should be obtained from the pupils' own observation and investigation." *Junior Secondary Education* (1955) p. 99.

"The character of the Home Area will be reflected to some degree in the nature of the studies undertaken . . . The study of source material . . . should be an integral part of this work." *Scottish Certificate of Education Examination. Conditions and Arrangements 1967* p. 57 cf. *ibid* pp. 41-3 for the practice of nominating "topics" in the Examination. We understand that the proposed certificate of Sixth Year Studies in Geography will lay heavy emphasis on this type of work through field studies and a "dissertation" on a prescribed area "using relevant data from other disciplines".

* "There are three very strong reasons for starting the junior secondary course with the home area. It ensures that the early stages of the pupil's work will be based on his own real experience, from which it should be easier both to arouse greater interest and to secure readier understanding; thus the pupil would be provided with a body of geographical knowledge and ideas through comparison with which the later work may be made more comprehensible. It provides ideal opportunity for methods of learning in which the pupils may actively co-operate, e.g., in securing information for themselves, and which can thereafter with suitable modification be used throughout the course." *Ibid.* p. 105.

"There are two good reasons for giving special attention to local history in the junior secondary school. First, since the references will be to places and things which the pupils have a chance to know well, it should be easy to arouse their interest. Secondly it will be easier for them to appreciate how the world changes when the results of the changes are before their eyes." *Ibid.* p. 130.

9. A further consideration is the problem posed by the modern records of local authorities. The twentieth century has seen a vast increase in the quantity of records created. In part this is due to increasing functions but it is due even more to technical advances in the fields of reproduction of the written word. This increase in the quantity of records created and the problem posed by it are common to the central government and to all present-day administrative organisms. From the point of view of both the future research worker and the administrators themselves this is a problem which must be faced. Since it would be quite impossible to preserve for the historian of the future all the records at present created it is essential to devise some system of selection whereby those records having permanent historical significance are segregated from the mass and their preservation ensured. This selection is also essential for practical reasons. Every authority is creating and acquiring records which—quite irrespective of any historical interest—must be preserved for long periods. Title deeds are one obvious example but papers involving major matters of policy or precedent may also require to be referred to by the authority's officials. The alternative to a system of selective review is to retain all records for a very long period. This would be both expensive, by reason of the space which the records occupy, and inefficient since without an elaborate indexing system the small nucleus of valuable material would soon be submerged and could not be retrieved from the much greater mass of ephemeral matter. In these circumstances we are unable to recommend any system for local authority records which does not provide for the problems raised by modern records.

THE PRESENT POSITION

10. The responsibility for the custody of Local Authority records in Scotland rests with the clerks of the authorities concerned in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1947 which lays down (Sec. 353) that "subject to any administrative scheme and to any general directions which the council may give, the county clerk, the town clerk of a burgh and the clerk of a district council, shall have the charge and custody of and be responsible for all charters, deeds, records and other documents belonging to the council or to the county, burgh or district, as the case may be." A saving clause permits the transmission of records to the Scottish Record Office in terms of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937.

11. Section 5(2) of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937 lays down that "... it shall be lawful for the town council of any burgh in Scotland, or for any other local authority in Scotland, with the consent of the Keeper, to transmit any of their records to the Keeper for custody." In terms of Sec. 5(3) records may be retransmitted by the Scottish Record Office to the authority concerned.

12. The transmission of local authority records to the Scottish Record Office can also be made in terms of the Burgh Registers (Scotland) Act 1926. This Act provides that on a vacancy occurring in the office of Keeper of any burgh Register of Sasines framed under the Burgh Registers Act of 1681 the Register shall be discontinued and the volumes since 1870 transmitted to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland. A proviso allows for the gradual return of transmitted volumes to the burgh through a series of quinquennial retransmissions.

13. Local Authority records transmitted in terms of these two Acts fill 1,934 linear feet in the Scottish Record Office. The character of these transmissions has however been selective and restricted in character. No records of any county or district

council and no records of any burgh created in terms of the Act of 1831 and subsequent statutes have as yet been transmitted under the 1937 Act.* Although a considerable quantity of records has been transmitted by the older Scottish burghs no consistent policy has governed the extent of their transmissions which have been agreed with each individual authority in the light of its wishes and administrative requirements. Twenty-two burghs have transmitted all their significant records up to a given date—generally 1900. Twenty-five more have transmitted portions of their records—a common practice being to transmit the more formal records such as the Register of Deeds and to retain the Council minutes. In some cases only isolated items have passed to the Scottish Record Office. The last burgh Register of Sasines was discontinued in 1963. The majority of burghs have taken advantage of the 1926 Act to transmit all their Sasine volumes although in some cases volumes earlier in date than 1870 have been retained. Only Glasgow has taken advantage of the provision for quinquennial retransmission.

14. Although the transmissions of local authority records to the Scottish Record Office have been restricted in scope they still represent a considerable contribution by the central government towards the care of local records in general and local authority records in particular. Those local authority records which have been transmitted to the Scottish Record Office have been arranged by archivally trained staff, repaired where necessary by skilled craftsmen and made available to the public. If they had not been deposited they would at best have been inaccessible and at worst lost. This contribution moreover has been made at no cost to the local authorities concerned who have retained the ownership of their records and have been able to requisition them back, not only for administrative reference but also for exhibitions which the staff of the Scottish Record Office have helped to organise.

15. At the same time the Scottish Record Office has also provided the only available service for many other classes of records of essentially local interest—for example sheriff court records, kirk session records and family muniments. Members of the staff of the Scottish Record Office have readily provided lectures and instruction to local societies and to further education classes and they have taken a leading part in the editing of local records for publication and in the administration of local societies.

16. Accommodation difficulties have restricted the intake of all local records into the Scottish Record Office in recent years. We understand, however, that a new auxiliary repository at the former St. George's Church, Edinburgh, containing some 70,000 linear feet of record shelving will according to present plans be available early in 1970.

17. The Scottish Record Office moreover has not confined itself to being a mere repository but has extended its interests and its influence to those records which are housed elsewhere than in the Register House. Its liaison section advises government departments, sheriff clerks and private owners on all matters connected with their records, many of which will remain permanently in their present custody. By informal arrangement records have been repaired for local libraries and private owners and recently specialised training was arranged for the craftsman who is carrying out binding and document repairs in the new City Archives of Glasgow.

* A few records of bodies which should be vested in county councils, and a few district council records, have been acquired by the Scottish Record Office from individuals and firms into whose custody they had fallen.

18. We attach particular importance to the growth of the system of liaison between the Scottish Record Office and the government departments in Scotland. Following recommendations made by an interdepartmental committee in 1961 the need for a selective review of modern records has been expressly recognised. The departments carry out this work in close and continuous liaison with the Scottish Record Office through designated staff on both sides. As a result the experience which the staff of the Scottish Record Office has acquired in this field is (outwith the Public Record Office in London) unique in scale and variety among archive institutions in the United Kingdom.

19. Apart from the Scottish Record Office (and the National Library of Scotland whose interests lie along different paths) the only institution in Scotland which is capable of offering anything like a full range of archival services is the record office established by the City of Glasgow in 1964. In the cities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen facilities are provide through designated officers for the consultation of older records and for dealing with official and private queries concerning them. But these officers do not have at their disposal the ancillary staff or services of a record office and they play no part in the review of modern records.

20. Certain local authority and university libraries and museums have accepted deposits of records but these deposits do not comprise any local authority records in the strict sense and the facilities afforded by these libraries have been limited to safe custody and public access. There is some doubt about the legal powers of libraries to accept records. There are in Scotland two classes of library authority. County libraries are administered by the Education authorities and derive their powers from the Education (Scotland) Act 1962.* Burgh libraries operate under Public Libraries (Scotland) Acts.* While the latter Acts would seem by implication to confer on library authorities the power to provide accommodation for records, the Education Act does not seem to confer similar powers on the libraries operating under it.

21. No facilities exist in Scotland for the training of archivists such as are available in several English universities. The national institutions—the Scottish Record Office and the National Library of Scotland—train their own staff after recruitment.

22. Thus with the exception of the records transmitted to the Scottish Record Office and the records of the three cities mentioned in paragraph 19 local authority records in Scotland remain in the direct custody of the clerk and other officers of the authorities concerned. All the evidence which has reached us indicates that the value of these records is appreciated and that in general they are carefully looked after, the few exceptions appearing to arise from want of facilities rather than lack of interest. In such circumstances however the older records cannot receive the archival storage which they require and cannot be classified, listed and indexed to archival standards. Nor are there any facilities for repair. Until a regular system of records management is in force there will be a recurrent risk of ill-considered destruction—the returns to a circular issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department in 1964 revealed the complete disappearance of several large blocks of records which could only be explained on this hypothesis. At the same time although there is a unanimous willingness by local authorities to make their records available to students there are no proper facilities for doing so and it is clear that any large

* see Appendix B.

demand for public consultation would in most cases create a considerable administrative problem arising from the need to provide working space and adequate supervision.

23. It is clear too that while Scottish local authorities are in general conscious of the problems created by their modern records and are anxious to receive guidance concerning them few have any regular system for review and selection for preservation. In all too many cases there is evidence that the haphazard accumulation of records in the past has led perforce to the destruction of large quantities of non-current records with little consideration of their possible historical or even administrative value.

24. The Scottish record system centralised in its basic form but highly limited in its scope contrasts with the system prevailing in England and Wales where almost every county and county borough and a number of municipal boroughs support their own record offices and where several universities run courses to train staff for the local records service. These record offices are independent of any central control and, even when they accept central government records, they receive no direct financial assistance from the Treasury.

25. This system has in many respects worked well and has much to commend it. While the records are under the supervision of fully qualified staff the system still allows for a considerable degree of decentralisation and it enables people in any area to study the records relating to that area without travelling undue distances to do so. The contribution made by several record offices to education has already been noted in paragraphs 5 and 7. The detailed knowledge of his region and the local contacts he acquires enable the archivist to make provision for all classes of records in his local authority area. Being an employee of the local authority in direct contact with its other officials he should be well placed to supervise the review and destruction of modern records and to perform valuable services to his authority in the retrieval of information from its older records which may be useful for administrative purposes.

26. However, it should be remembered that the English system represents an unplanned and empirical growth and if a national records system were to be planned *de novo* (as is the case in Scotland) it would not necessarily take the present English form. Indeed the English system has been heavily criticised in much of the evidence reaching us from archivists employed under it. In the first place it has led to a proliferation of small record offices often working in competition with one another. These small offices lack the resources to provide a full range of facilities especially in the field of record repair. They cannot, moreover, offer the salary scale or promotion prospects to attract the best staff and there is virtually no movement of staff between the English local record service and the national record institutions. Local authority record offices in England are currently finding difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. We are informed that up to 12 months' delay in filling vacancies is not unusual and that the quality of staff being recruited is deteriorating. Finally, while the English local archivist should in theory be well placed to advise his administration on the problems of modern record management and while some have done so most successfully, it remains true that only a very small minority play any part in this field. The explanation for this is not clear—the pressing need to arrange and catalogue the older records, the indifference of administrators to

record problems and the place of the archivist in the local government hierarchy have all been suggested.

27. In some few cases an English local record office has been based on an existing library the archivist being an employee of the library service and subordinate to the librarian. This combination has been generally condemned, all the evidence reaching our Committee indicating that it does not work satisfactorily. The requirements of the records tend to take second place to those of the printed books and the archivist is in the unsatisfactory position of being subordinated to a member of another profession and permanently disqualified from the senior post in the department of the authority which employs him.

CHAPTER THREE

Possible Solutions

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

28. Before proceeding to examine the various possible solutions we considered carefully whether it would be premature to put forward a final solution in view of the existence of the Royal Commission which is at present examining the local government structure of Scotland. It might appear that this constitutes a strong argument for postponing any action in the field of records until it is known what the future local government pattern of the country will be. We believe on the contrary that it constitutes a strong inducement for speedy action. Experience shows that the transfer of functions from one body to another is among the most frequent causes of the disappearance of records. This is exemplified in the wholesale losses of parish council records which followed the abolition of these councils in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929. In the evidence which has been tendered to the committee two instances were noted where the amalgamation of a burgh with a neighbouring authority had led to the complete disappearance of records. We further believe that the work of any successor authorities which may emerge from reorganisation will be substantially assisted if the working papers of their predecessors have been reduced to their orderly essentials prior to transference. In these circumstances we consider it essential that machinery for the proper custody and review of local authority records be put into force with the minimum of delay and well in advance of any local government reorganisation. While it might be possible to achieve these aims through temporary expedients it is clearly preferable that provided the best permanent solution is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to any alterations of local government structure it should be put into force at once.

USE OF MICROFILM

29. Before considering solutions to the problems of archival storage, public access and the review and selection of modern records, we have considered how these problems could be minimised by the use of microfilm.

30. We believe that there can be no disputing the value of microfilm in certain fields. Microfilm is a cheap and, if the process is properly carried out, permanent means of reproduction. Due to its cheapness it is an obvious method of disseminating archives in copy form for reference and study, and its cheapness and permanence alike make it the ideal medium for safeguarding, by copying, records of exceptional value.

31. It has been suggested that microfilm could go far to solve the problems of the storage of records in general and of modern records in particular. This question is in a great measure one of cost. If substantial financial savings would result from wholesale microfilming this would offset the physical disadvantages of consultation inherent in this medium.

32. The basic costs of the photographic process—camera, materials and operator's time—represent only a proportion of the total costs of microfilming. Before they can be processed the records have to be selected and assembled in order. Micro-filmed records are useless unless the information which they contain can be retrieved speedily and without undue labour; and the problems created by inadequately arranged and indexed records will not be solved by microfilming them. Indeed, they will be intensified due to the physical characteristics of the medium. To be usable, microfilm calls for a system of indexing and classification which in many cases may require to be fairly elaborate. The labour, and consequently the costs, involved in the preparation and indexing will vary according to the character of the records concerned, and in view of this variance it is impossible to quantify the overall cost. We understand, however, that it will not be unreasonable to double or treble the basic costs to allow for the factors to which we have already referred. Since storage methods and the cost of space also vary widely it is equally impossible to lay down a definite ratio between the cost of microfilm and the cost of storing records in their original form, but we are advised that even under favourable circumstances—properly arranged records and a planned programme—the initial cost of micro-filming represents not less than thirty-five to fifty years cost of storing the originals. Where storage is expensive and space difficult to find the cost may be equivalent to twenty-five years—but this would be exceptional.

33. It follows therefore that the wholesale microfilming of records is not economic. Nor is microfilm an effective substitute for the selective review of modern records, since the problems of search and retrieval of information from such a mass of micro-film would be well-nigh insuperable.

34. Microfilm may have an application to certain groups of records where the administrative staff requires ready and immediate access to them but where storage space is expensive. For example, drawings and plans in surveyors', engineers' and architects' offices are on account of their physical makeup more suitable for micro-filming than most other types of records and at the same time much more expensive to store. When such records are recorded on microfilm and the originals destroyed full scale copies can speedily and cheaply be produced by means of a reader printer. The application of microfilm in such fields is a matter solely of economics and each individual case must be considered carefully in the light of the costs, usage and other factors involved.

35. Within the limits set by accommodation and staffing the existing policy of centralisation has given good service to the using public and to local authorities in Scotland and clearly no reasonably successful system should be scrapped without the certainty that something better will take its place. It could be argued therefore that the present system should be retained and the necessary facilities given to the Scottish Record Office to enable the policy of centralisation to be carried out fully and completely.

36. It would take newly created record agencies many years to acquire the fund of expertise covering all classes of Scottish records which now exists in the Scottish Record Office—especially since the staff for these agencies would initially have to be recruited from England. Facilities for the training of archivists could no doubt be provided in one of the Scottish Universities, but it would be several years before such facilities bore fruit in the provision of experienced staff. The expertise of the Scottish Record Office would be especially valuable in the field of modern records where all the evidence which the Committee has received from local authority sources suggests that its potential contribution is appreciated and that far from being resented as central government interference it would be universally welcomed. Centralisation moreover would secure all the merits of a large scale institution (see paragraphs 14 to 17) together with a high and uniform standard of record administration. It would also enable the entire records of the country to be listed in a single union catalogue. For the academic scholar who wishes to consult or compare the records of a number of different authorities it would be highly convenient to have these records stored under one roof. There are many central government records which have a local application and which the student of local history would find it convenient to consult alongside the appropriate local records. Yet many of these central government records could never, for administrative or other reasons, be decentralised into local custody. The Register of Sasines—a basic source of local history—is an obvious example.

37. Possibly the main obstacle to any policy of centralisation is the physical difficulty of providing adequate storage accommodation. In theory it would not be impossible to build in Edinburgh a repository of sufficient size but the practical difficulties of site and building costs would be almost insuperable. The difficulties of providing space for records in Edinburgh are illustrated in the report of Lord Keith's Committee on the Accommodation Needs of the Scottish Record Office, Registrar-General's Office and Lyon Office, published in 1963. And clearly the growing bulk of national records must have first claim on the accommodation available in Edinburgh.

38. Centralisation in Edinburgh would deprive local people of access to their local records and if there is to be a conflict of interest between the local and the academic user we are on balance agreed that the interests of the local user should prevail. For the records are the creation of the community of which he forms a part and are so in a sense his property. It is no great imposition for the academic worker to set aside the time necessary to travel to get his material: it is in fact arguable that he will benefit from being made to study the records in the locality to which they relate. To the local man however the study of local records can rarely be other than a leisure time occupation which can only be pursued if the records are available for study during his leisure periods. Again, while the Scottish Record Office has

achieved much it would inevitably be remote from record interests and societies in the localities and centralisation would inhibit the development of such local interests. In particular it would render difficult the educational use of records to which we have referred in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

39. This remoteness would also be felt in the field of modern records. While local authorities have indicated their desire for liaison with the Scottish Record Office this liaison could be carried out much more satisfactorily if the archivist were a man with local knowledge in day to day touch with the administration than if he were a peripatetic adviser from Edinburgh. Furthermore it is established archive procedure that records should be transferred to an archive repository as soon as they cease to be immediately current even although there will be a continuing need for administrative reference to them. Such references would be difficult or impossible if the records were sent to Edinburgh.

40. Finally it is an undoubted fact that although substantial numbers of local authorities have in practice been willing to deposit their records in the Scottish Record Office there will always remain a significant number who will refuse to do so and who will therefore have to find other means of providing for their own record needs.

LOCAL CUSTODY THROUGH LOCAL AUTHORITY RECORD OFFICES

41. If centralisation is to be rejected the most obvious alternative might seem to be a system of local authority record offices such as exists in England. The deficiencies of this system, however, have already been noted in paragraph 26. And there is one other powerful objection to its adoption in Scotland. Scottish local authorities as at present constituted are in general smaller and poorer than their English counterparts. The average rateable values of English counties, county boroughs and municipal boroughs which support record offices are respectively £20.7 m., £17.3 m., and £1.9 m. per annum.* The average rateable values of Scottish counties, counties of cities and large burghs are respectively £0.8 m., £10.9 m., and £0.9 m.† While several individual authorities in Scotland would be fully capable of supporting a record office on English lines the great majority would not. Thus the praiseworthy and most successful initiative taken by the City of Glasgow does not greatly assist with the problem presented by the country as a whole.

LOCAL CUSTODY THROUGH LOCAL AUTHORITY LIBRARY SERVICE

42. An alternative form of local custody has been suggested in which the services of a professional archivist would be dispensed with and use made instead of the existing public library service. One county library in Scotland—Orkney—has in fact maintained a considerable record repository for over ten years which within its self-imposed limits of function—the storage and production of records—has been most successful.

43. This course would be considerably less costly than any other system suggested to us. It is cheaper to expand an existing service where the basic services already exist than to create a new one. Many of the major facilities of a record office are in fact already available in the library service—for example, search rooms and refer-

* Rates and Rateable Values in England and Wales, 1965-66.

† Rates and Rateable Values in Scotland, 1965-66.

ence libraries and in some cases facilities for the reading of microfilm—and it would be a needless extravagance to duplicate them. Admittedly many of the public libraries in Scotland are short of space but the provision of extra accommodation within the library service particularly at a time of extensive planning and rebuilding need not be an insuperable barrier. The quantity of records requiring archival storage is comparatively small in comparison with the average intake of books into the libraries and as the same storage can serve for both books and records there need be no wastage. And it must be emphasised that whether the accommodation is found in the library service or elsewhere it will still have to be found and paid for if the records are not to be neglected.

44. While it may be argued that the professions of librarian and archivist are distinct and that the skills of the one profession cannot be adapted to the other the librarian is trained in many techniques which can most usefully be employed in archive work—for example indexing and the preparation of source lists. And these objections could in a great measure be countered if librarians were encouraged to take the optional papers on palaeography and archive administration in the existing Fellow of the Library Association syllabus and if selected librarians could be attached to the Scottish Record Office for periods of practical training. The recent introduction of an honours course in Librarianship at the University of Strathclyde should further help in attracting to the library service men and women of the right calibre and educational standards.

45. The use of the library service would also have several positive advantages. The combination of records with the very large collection of local reference works held by most libraries would provide a unique combination of written and printed sources under the same roof. Even assuming that records were only decentralised down to the level of the permanently staffed library capable of providing adequate supervision and open every day such a scheme would allow a far greater degree of decentralisation than any other alternative. Under no conceivable system could facilities for consulting their own records in their own burghs be made available to the citizens of the majority of medium-sized burghs. The administration of the county library service by education authorities would facilitate the educational use of records to which we have referred in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

46. There are, however, distinct objections to the simple adoption of this course. There are certain differences of technique and outlook between the professions of librarian and archivist which cannot be ignored. A kindred objection is that under such a system archives will never be the primary interest of the library staff who must seek their advancement in the sphere of printed books. There is, consequently, a clear danger that the records would be inadequately catered for. It must moreover be accepted that the library service in Scotland as at present constituted is of variable quality. While many libraries might be able to undertake archive work without undue difficulty others are at present strained even to perform their primary task. To place an extra load on these libraries would be to the detriment of books and archives alike. This last objection is one which we would hope that time will cure.

47. But two fundamental obstacles to the use of the library service *per se* appear insuperable. Firstly it would lead to an even greater degree to that proliferation of small record offices without adequate facilities which has already been criticised in

paragraph 26 as an undesirable feature of the English system. And secondly we do not consider that the librarian is either well placed in the hierarchy of local government or properly qualified to advise the clerks and other officials of his authority on the problems of modern records. For this will in practice involve giving advice not merely on the future historical value of records but also on the methods whereby records should be organised and framed.

48. Not all these objections would be applicable if the library service underwent changes as a result of a general reorganisation of local government. In such an event it is not known how the library service would be administered. Assuming, however, that it became the responsibility of a sufficiently large authority it would be possible to employ under the senior librarian a qualified archivist commanding a salary at least commensurate with that paid to county archivists in England. However, for the reasons noted in paragraph 27 we reject this course.

REGIONALISATION

49. If both centralisation and a solution based on existing local authorities are alike to be rejected some form of regionalisation might seem to offer a reasonable compromise between complete centralisation and complete local custody. Such regionalisation could take one of two forms.

50. In the first local authorities could form joint committees, appoint archivists and build a repository. Arrangements along these lines have been made successfully in certain districts of England where, to cite one example, the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and the City of Carlisle form a joint record authority. The system has worked well where it has been tried in England in that it has provided a record unit large enough to give reasonable service and there seems no reason to doubt that it could be applied in many parts of Scotland.

51. There are very strong objections which are common to any form of regional solution. These are discussed in the following paragraphs. There are also specific objections to this particular form of regionalisation. A reorganisation of local government is under consideration and the areas covered by any *ad hoc* joint committees may not coincide with those which will emerge from the present Royal Commission. In some areas the formation of joint committees would for the reason given in paragraph 41 inevitably be hindered by local difficulties and in all areas it would take time. Moreover the senior staff for such regional record offices would initially have to be recruited from England. In terms alike of capital expenditure and staffing costs this would represent a most expensive solution and we believe that the alternative put forward in paragraph 58 is not only considerably cheaper but superior on almost every other ground.

52. The second form of regionalisation which has been suggested is the provision of a series of regional record offices controlled and staffed by the Scottish Record Office. This would ensure the maintenance of national standards and would make use of the corpus of expertise available in the Scottish Record Office. A system on these lines would give almost all the advantages of the present system of centralisation and at the same time allow for a measure of physical decentralisation. The local officers of the Scottish Record Office as employees of the central government would enjoy national salary scales and have open to them the promotion prospects of a national service. This should encourage the recruitment of the highest quality

staff. Moreover being resident locally these officers would have all the advantages of local contacts coupled with the facility of being able to draw on the experience of their parent department in fields such as the review and destruction of modern records. Also there are many classes of central government records which are essentially local both in content and origin—for example the Sheriff Court records. Under present legislation (the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937) the Keeper of the Records has a statutory responsibility for those records of which he cannot divest himself. Regional record offices staffed and administered by the Keeper would provide the most convenient instruments for the local deposit of these records.

53. The main specific objection to this course is that like the alternative form of regionalisation noted in paragraph 50 it would be highly expensive in capital and staff. It would moreover throw the entire financial burden of a local record service on to the Treasury who would be expected to finance both the repositories and the staff. While Scottish local authorities in general have in the past made no contribution towards the cost of the archival care of local records equally the Treasury makes no contribution to these services in England and we do not think it can fairly be asked to bear the entire burden in Scotland (see paragraph 77).

54. None of the specific objections noted above with reference to either of these types of regionalisation appears to us to be insuperable. The decisive objection which applies equally to both is inherent in the compromise nature of a regional solution. It would not provide for true local custody and in fact some of the evidence which favours a regional solution would appear logically to support a policy of centralisation and to be only deterred from advocating it by the inherent physical difficulties and by the necessity of paying lip service to the ideal of local custody. Taking a realistic view of the financial resources necessary to provide a full record service it would not be possible (under either of these alternatives) to envisage more than four or five such repositories to cover the country. Granted the distances involved and the problems of communications the records would still be little or no more accessible to the local populations of very large areas of Scotland than if they were centralised in Edinburgh. This problem is seen most acutely in the North and West. But even in the most populous area of the central lowlands authorities would still have to rely on repositories in either Glasgow or Edinburgh.

55. The effect of this can be given concrete illustration by the experience of the burgh of Stirling. The records of this burgh were deposited in the Scottish Record Office in 1957 since when they have been put in order and listed in detail. Copies of this list are available in the burgh library, and the Scottish Record Office have annually organised an exhibition of selected records in the burgh. This exhibition has aroused considerable local interest in a burgh which possesses a keen sense of its history. But an examination of the attendance registers and permits in the Scottish Record Office suggests that the inconvenience of travel to Edinburgh has in practice militated against the study of their records by the people of the burgh.

56. These difficulties regarding local access would of course be mitigated by some arrangement whereby records from the regional repository could be temporarily transferred to local libraries or to other local institutions where consultation facilities were available. But while such temporary transfer might in some measure satisfy the demands of established users they would be an entirely inadequate

substitute for permanent local custody in which the ready availability of the records would itself continuously stimulate fresh interest and usage. And we believe that if the library service is to be used it would be better to use it in such a way that it can make a positive contribution which will enable it to realise to the full its very considerable potential. A system based on more decentralised custody must of course be compatible with good record management and security. We believe that both these provisos can be satisfied under the system outlined in paragraphs 58 *et seq.*

LOCAL CUSTODY COMBINED WITH CENTRAL CONTROL

57. Each of the solutions put forward has substantial merits albeit counterweighed by substantial defects. Centralisation would provide a national service with national standards and a union catalogue and it would in so doing make use of the only immediately available body of record experience in Scotland. Under a regional system this professional expertise would be decentralised to an extent which would allow qualified representatives of the record authority to have intimate and regular acquaintance with the authorities in their areas. Local authority custody would provide for local access by local people and, if the library service were used, would permit the exploitation of its unrivalled facilities for decentralised public access and for the combination under one roof of printed and original sources—all at less cost than under any other conceivable solution.

58. We believe that a compromise can be found which combines the merits of all these solutions and in a great measure eliminates their defects. In a recent ruling made in connection with sheriff court records* the Lord Advocate has held that the Keeper of the Records of Scotland can discharge his responsibilities towards the records transmitted to his custody through local repositories if he were afforded direct control over such repositories or at least had free access to them and facilities for carrying out there at will the duties laid upon him by Section 8 of the 1937 Act with regard to preservation and access. This ruling applies equally to local authority records. On this basis local authorities could be advised to transfer their records formally to the Keeper who in turn would undertake to place them in the nearest suitable local repository consistent with their safety. Such a system would combine the principal merits of the present centralised system with the maximum degree of decentralisation and we accept it as the basis of our recommendations.

59. We have given careful thought to the means whereby under this system the Keeper of the Records of Scotland should exercise his control. It appears to us essential on the one hand that the staff through whom he operates should be in all ways part of the central staff structure of the Scottish Record Office. On the other hand if the Keeper's control is to be effective and if regular liaison is to be maintained with local authorities and local repositories specific staff must be allotted to specific areas where they can get to know the people and the problems. For these reasons we consider that the supervisory activities of the Scottish Record Office should be organised on a regional basis and that those regions which are not within daily reach of Edinburgh should be served by resident staff. We do not consider it either necessary or desirable for the Committee to demarcate these regions. But we suggest that an adequate service could be provided by five regional organisations, two of which were based in Edinburgh.

* Report on Sheriff Court Records, para. 63.

60. These regional organisations would be for supervisory and liaison purposes only—the repository and search room facilities being provided through localised agencies to which the Keeper of the Records of Scotland will pass the records. We believe that these duties could be carried out in each region by one senior member of the Scottish Record Office staff with minimum typing and clerical assistance. Only office accommodation would be required. This represents a very substantial economy and it is only made possible by the fact that the officers in each region would be able to call on the central pool of labour both skilled and unskilled available in the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh and also on the central accommodation and technical services there. In particular the regions would call on the repair service of the Scottish Record Office, a highly skilled and specialised branch of archive work and the one which gains most from the equipment and facilities of a large institution.

61. Ideally we would recommend that each of these regional organisations would be equipped with a small repository and search room. These would not act as a substitute for the "localised agencies" whose decentralised facilities are fundamental to the scheme. But they would serve for the custody of records for which no suitable local accommodation was available. Such repositories would involve a considerable capital expense and would increase very substantially the annual staffing costs. In view of this it may well be that their provision is not justified on financial grounds.

62. Even the provision of a regional organisation along the lines proposed would still represent a considerable financial contribution by the central government. But it would be a logical extension of the liaison services at present operated by the Scottish Record Office. In fact many of these services would as we envisage them be undertaken by the regional liaison officers. We have in mind in particular the inspection and arrangement of sheriff court records and the work of the National Register of Archives (Scotland) which surveys and lists muniments in private hands. The absorption of these existing liaison services into the new system would proportionately reduce the central staff requirements of the Scottish Record Office.

63. A corollary of this minimal staffing which we suggest for the regional liaison service is that its responsibilities must be limited to the essential duties of supervising the localised agencies and to liaison with the local authority administrations. In particular the Keeper of the Records of Scotland will be unable in respect of the records transmitted to him under this scheme to undertake more than the basic arrangement and listing which is necessary for the security of the records and for ensuring that archival standards are maintained. Any more elaborate inventorying or indexing will have to be undertaken by the staff of the localised agencies or by the voluntary efforts of local history societies to whose growth we hope the decentralisation of records will provide a stimulus. Granted the overall supervision of the Keeper we do not consider this altogether a defect. The extra duties placed on the localised agencies may in fact render their task more rewarding and congenial and by enabling them to play a fuller role ensure their more active and knowledgeable participation (see paragraph 68).

64. This scheme will also enable the Scottish Record Office to undertake a union catalogue of all local records in Scotland and to be responsible for the wide dissemination throughout the localised agencies of information concerning all classes

of records wherever located which may be of interest to the public who use them. To gain full benefit from this last-mentioned service it is of course desirable that facilities for photocopying and particularly for the production and reading of microfilm should be as widely available as possible throughout the "localised agencies". The overall control of records exercised by the Keeper would in appropriate cases permit of the transfer of records between local repositories and from the local repositories to Edinburgh or vice versa.

65. The "regional officers" as they might be termed will deal directly, with the localised agencies who will provide the storage and search room facilities, and with the administrative staffs of local authorities in matters concerned with the review and destruction of modern records. Their counterparts in each of these fields can be considered separately.

66. The "localised agencies" may take one of several forms. Whatever their form they will require to be formally approved by the Keeper. In some cases access and storage facilities might be provided in the existing administrative buildings. But this should normally be regarded possibly as a temporary expedient. In other cases local museums might be appropriate. But in most areas the local library service would appear to be the natural medium. The advantages which this service can offer have been noted in paragraphs 42 to 45. We believe that the objections are eliminated under the system proposed.

67. The supervision by the regional liaison officers of the Scottish Record Office should ensure the maintenance of good archival standards. The staff of the localised agencies will not be asked to concern themselves with the review of modern records. The deficiencies of the library service in many areas and in particular the shortage of library accommodation can be met by the flexible character of the proposed arrangements. The bulk of older local authority records (strictly defined) is relatively small and could in most cases continue to be accommodated in the administrative buildings until proper accommodation was available, especially when it is borne in mind that the operation of the scheme should concurrently free space by the review and destruction of modern material. As a last resort records for which no local accommodation was available could be temporarily transmitted either to the central repository of the Scottish Record Office or (under the Keeper's control) to a suitable adjacent localised agency. Any other records such as sheriff court records which might be suitable for local custody could be held in Edinburgh for as long as is necessary and their transfer to local custody phased to suit each local situation. In this connection the reserve of accommodation in the St. George's Church repository noted in paragraph 16 could be of vital importance to the success of the scheme and we express the hope that its provision will not be further postponed. Granted these considerations, it would appear that as regards accommodation in the libraries the need is not so much for initial space as for long-term planning.

68. It would be necessary of course for the library service and the other "localised agencies" to accept that they played their part in this system under the superintendence of the Scottish Record Office. We feel complete confidence in the co-operation of the library service since all the evidence which the Committee has received from librarians indicates that such supervision would be not only acceptable but welcome. And it should be emphasised that the system which we envisage does not mean that the libraries will have to act as passive agents for the custody

of records over which they have no control. The provision of storage and search room facilities implies much more than mere production on demand. The exploitation of the records implies a readiness to advise and assist users on the records and their content. Staffing along the lines we envisage will only permit of the basic arrangement and listing of the records by the Scottish Record Office staff. In many cases their use would be greatly facilitated by the more elaborate cataloguing of specially important sections within the basic archival framework laid down by the Scottish Record Office, by the preparation of guides and source lists and in particular by indexing. We feel that these duties should be undertaken by the staff of the localised agencies who in carrying them out will also acquire additional knowledge of the records which will greatly enhance the service which they can give to the using public. For some of their tasks the librarian's training and skill are as relevant as those of the archivist.

69. These duties appear to us of such importance as to make it in our opinion essential that in any library service to which records are entrusted they should be the responsibility of a particular member of the staff although this responsibility need not necessarily be whole-time. Such a proviso would obviate the clear danger that records might be treated as of secondary importance to the printed books. It would ensure that a member of the library staff is sufficiently familiar with the records to give the using public the advice and assistance which they will require and also to see that the necessary work of indexing, etc., is carried out. We would suggest that in some cases these duties might appropriately be undertaken by the deputy librarian or by the reference librarian but as the ideal solution we would recommend the creation in the larger library units of an additional post at reference librarian level combining the responsibility for the local history collection of books, records and for educational work with the schools and classes of further education, to the potential importance of which we referred in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7. It is essential that these posts should not be regarded as "dead ends" or "sidelines" and that the staff holding them should be free to return to the main ladder of library promotion. In order to ensure the availability of suitable men and women to fill them we hope that facilities will be made available at the University of Strathclyde for students undertaking degrees in Librarianship to take the papers in palaeography and archive administration in the present Fellow of the Library Association syllabus and that libraries which accept or intend to accept records should attach members of their staff to the Scottish Record Office for short periods of training.

70. We have noted in paragraph 20 the doubts surrounding the legal powers of library authorities to accept records. We recommend that in any future library legislation consideration should be given to ensuring that these doubts are removed.

71. The liaison services with local authorities concerning modern records would be independent of and parallel to the supervision of the "localised agencies" and the staff of the libraries and other agencies would play no part in them. It is axiomatic that the organisation of records must be controlled by the administrators who use them and staffing considerations alone make it inevitable that the primary responsibility for the review of records must lie with the administrative staffs also. But it is clearly desirable that in both these closely connected fields there should be archival guidance, and local authorities in their evidence to the present Committee have unanimously recognised this need.

72. We do not consider it necessary or desirable for the present Committee to lay down detailed rules or systems for carrying out the work of review. Well organised liaison and good personal relations which must be its foundation will, we believe, be more effective than any general directives or advice which would have to be adapted to the needs of individual authorities. But if such liaison is to be effective the regional officer must have a clear line of communication to the administration. This line must lie through the department of the clerk with whom rests the statutory responsibility for all the records of his authority. The task of the regional officer would be almost impossible if in each authority he had to deal with a multiplicity of autonomous departments each employing their own systems of registration and duplicating their record holdings indiscriminately. We therefore recommend that in all authorities there should be appointed a records officer. This officer would be an official of the Clerk's department and should have both responsibility for the registry and filing system in the Clerk's department (which will in all cases form the primary records of the authority) and also a general knowledge and oversight of all records created by the other departments of the authority. The records officer would be the normal channel for liaison between the administration and the regional officer. Except in the very largest authorities we do not envisage that his duties would be whole-time.

73. We further believe that there is a need for an intermediate stage between the current filing systems and the ultimate record repositories. This could take the form of a records centre, the staffing and administration of which would be the responsibility of the Clerk's department and would as we envisage it be the responsibility of the records officer. The various administrative departments of an authority would hold records only for as long as they were in frequent use. Semi-current or obsolescent records from all departments would be centralised in the records centre. Here they would be destroyed at the appropriate period either in terms of automatic destruction schedules or after consultation with the department concerned and the regional officer. The records centre would in fact act as a filter from which only the records destined for permanent preservation would emerge for transfer to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.

74. The transmission of records to the Keeper and their deposit in the localised agencies will be only the last stage in a process which begins with their creation in the current filing systems of local authorities. No hard and fast point can be laid down at which current records become archives. The most that can be said is that with the passage of time records will tend to be less frequently consulted by the administrator. It is also true that if a record is to be permanently preserved it should pass into proper archival custody as soon as possible since until that happens there will be a risk certainly of deterioration and possibly of loss. In these circumstances we would recommend that records should be transmitted to the Keeper as soon as possible after they have been selected for permanent preservation and have passed out of current use. It will always remain open to the originating authority to requisition them back temporarily and indeed the Keeper is under a statutory obligation to provide this service.* We would further recommend that

* Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937, Sec. 5(3):—

(3) Any document transmitted under this section to the Keeper shall be re-transmitted by him to the Department, local authority, body or person from whom it was received, on application to that effect made on the ground that such re-transmission is necessary for the purposes of such Department, local authority, body or person. Any record so re-transmitted shall be returned to the Keeper as soon as may be after it has ceased to be required for the purposes for which it was re-transmitted.

every effort be made to transmit all records before they are 30 years' old. These provisions are in line with the established practice of government departments where they have worked satisfactorily and caused no administrative inconvenience.

75. We would further recommend that no unnecessary restrictions be placed on public access to records transmitted to the Keeper and that only in exceptional circumstances should records be closed to access once they have reached the age of 30 years. The exceptions we have in mind are records whose premature revelation might cause embarrassment or distress to living persons or their near kin, records which disclose information obtained in confidence and records which contain information bearing on the private affairs of individuals or organisations. Such records should in our opinion be closed for 100 years. These provisions again are in line with the rules at present governing access to government records.

76. A scheme of a completely novel character such as is proposed above would inevitably have its teething troubles. It is suggested that there is a need for some advisory body specifically charged with the duty of advising on its operation. A records advisory body already exists in the Scottish Records Advisory Council which was established in terms of Section 7 of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937.* It should be noted that throughout its existence this body has invariably included in its membership not only representatives from areas outside Edinburgh and Glasgow but also at least one member who has made his career in local government. Granted the existence of this statutory body it would seem unnecessary to create a further body *ad hoc*. However, the membership of the Advisory Council is limited by statute to 12 and its composition must also take into account interests other than local ones. But there would seem to be no statutory objection to the appointment by the Advisory Council of sub-committees whose members need not be members of the main Council. If such sub-committees were appointed in each region they could act as a meeting point for the representatives of the Scottish Record Office, the localised agencies and the principal "consumer" interests. These interests consist of (i) the officials of the local authorities with whose records the scheme would deal; and (ii) the using public both academic and non-academic in the area concerned. These sub-committees could tender their advice through the Scottish Records Advisory Council to the Secretary of State. But at least during the teething period of the scheme it might be desirable to interpose between them and the Advisory Council a standing committee of the latter charged specifically with the duty of advising on the operation of the scheme. Such a committee (consisting in this case of members of the Council) could be summoned more easily

* 7. (1) There shall be constituted a Council to be called the Scottish Records Advisory Council, consisting of not more than twelve members, who shall be persons or representatives of public bodies or societies, interested in the public records of Scotland.

(2) The members of the aforesaid Council shall be appointed by the Secretary of State, shall hold office for three years from the date of their appointment, and shall be eligible for reappointment on expiry of that period: Provided that the Keeper shall be *ex officio* a member and chairman and convener of the Council.

(3) The aforesaid Council may submit proposals or make representations to the Secretary of State, the Lord Justice General, or the Lord President on questions relating to the public records of Scotland, and in particular to the custody, preservation, indexing, and cataloguing of those records, and to facilities for access to and examination of them by members of the public.

(4) The Council may make rules regarding their procedure and may by such rules prescribe their quorum.

and could meet more frequently than the full Council to whom it would, of course, report.

77. We have stressed the economies which the proposed scheme can offer through the maximum conservation of skilled manpower and the maximum use of existing facilities. In conclusion we would like to emphasise that as well as being economical it also divides the financial burden between the central government and the local authorities in a way which is both equitable and practicable. In England and Wales the entire cost of the local archives service has been borne by the ratepayer. In Scotland it has hitherto been borne almost entirely by the taxpayer. Moreover the largest class of local records in physical extent—the records of the sheriff courts—are in Scotland records of the central government for which the central government must bear the main cost even before the records pass into archival custody. If the present Scottish system were to remain unaltered these costs would continue to fall on the central government. In these circumstances we consider it only right that notwithstanding the position in England and Wales the central government should continue to bear a proportion of the cost of any Scottish local archive service. A necessary corollary of this is that the central government should continue to exercise a measure of control over local records which it does not exercise in England. For the reasons outlined above we believe this central control to be highly desirable. On the other hand if local records are recognised as a local service—as any proposal for decentralisation implies—it is equally a corollary that local authorities should also bear at least a proportion of the cost. Under the scheme which we have outlined the local authorities will be expected to pay for the accommodation and for the staffing of the localised agencies and the Treasury to pay for the Scottish Record Office staff and for certain skilled services such as repair. We believe that this represents a fair division of the burden. It is moreover a division which is clear-cut and which by its nature avoids any discussion, argument or delay such as are, with the best will in the world, inherent in any form of grant, subvention or other jointly financed enterprise. But in the last resort we question if differences regarding the relative liabilities of the central government and the local authorities should be a primary consideration. Any system must be paid for by the taxpayer, the ratepayer or by a combination of the two. An overwhelming argument for the solution now put forward is that the total cost to ratepayer and taxpayer combined would under it be considerably lower than under any other workable system.

78. Apart from the qualification noted in paragraph 20 the scheme which we have outlined could be put into force within the framework of the existing statutes. It must, of course, be voluntary but to justify the cost of a national records service it would be necessary for the great bulk of the larger local authorities to be willing to co-operate in it. We do not consider this an unrealistic hope. In the past many local authorities have transmitted their non-current records to the Keeper of the Records although such transmission meant the physical transfer of those records to Edinburgh. There must surely be fewer misgivings if formal transfer to the Keeper brought the same benefits while leaving the records in or near their natural homes and in the great majority of cases housed in buildings provided and staffed by the local authorities concerned. It would, of course, be possible for some local authorities to provide comprehensive records facilities out of their own resources. We would hope, however, that considerations of local prestige will not prevent them bringing their records within the framework of a comprehensive national scheme.

Summary of Recommendations

79. Our main conclusions and recommendations may be summarised as follows:

1. That any proposed arrangements should be capable of covering all records of local origin however created (paragraph 1).
2. That machinery for the proper custody and review of local authority records be put into force with the minimum delay and well in advance of any local government reorganisation (paragraph 28).
3. That in all local authorities there be a particular officer responsible under the clerk for records and for the registry and filing systems throughout the authority and that this officer operate a records centre for the review and disposal of non-current records (paragraphs 72 and 73).
4. That local authority records deemed worthy of preservation be formally transmitted to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland in terms of Section 5(2) of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937 as soon as possible after they pass out of current use and that the Keeper place these records in the nearest local repository consistent with their safety (paragraphs 58 and 74).
5. That every effort be made to transmit all such records before they are 30 years old (paragraph 74).
6. That no unnecessary restrictions be placed on public access to records so transmitted, and that only in exceptional circumstances should records be closed to public access once they have reached the age of 30 years. (paragraph 75)
7. That the Keeper of the Records of Scotland exercise supervision through a skeleton liaison staff organised on a regional basis but empowered when necessary to call on the central resources of the Scottish Record Office, the responsibilities of this staff being limited to the basic archival arrangement of the records, the general supervision of local repositories and to liaison with the local administrations in matters concerning the review and destruction of modern records (paragraphs 59, 60, 63, 65 and 71).
8. That local repository and search room facilities be provided and staffed by local authorities themselves—these facilities normally to be provided through the library service but local museums or existing administrative buildings to be used where appropriate. In all cases they must be approved by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland (paragraphs 60 and 66).
9. That records for which no local accommodation is available be placed temporarily either in the central repository of the Scottish Record Office or (under the Keeper's control) in accommodation belonging to an adjacent local authority (paragraph 67).

10. That the large-scale microfilming of records for permanent preservation is neither economic nor practicable but that microfilming may be justified in special circumstances (paragraphs 33 and 34).

11. That microfilm is a suitable medium for disseminating archives in copy form for reference and study and as a means of safeguarding records of exceptional value, and that facilities for the reading of microfilm be as widely available as possible throughout the local repositories (paragraphs 30 and 64).

12. That in any library service to which records are entrusted, they be the responsibility of a particular member of the staff (paragraph 69).

13. That libraries which accept or intend to accept records attach members of their staff to the Scottish Record Office for training (paragraph 69).

14. That facilities be available at the University of Strathclyde for students undertaking degrees in librarianship to take the papers in palaeography and archive administration in the present Fellow of the Library Association syllabus (paragraph 69).

15. That in any future library legislation consideration be given to removing any doubts surrounding the legal powers of library authorities to accept records (paragraph 70).

16. That sub-committees of the Scottish Records Advisory Council (established in terms of Section 7 of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937), representing the Scottish Record Office and other interested parties be established in each region to tender advice to the Secretary of State for Scotland on the operation of the scheme (paragraph 76).

80. In conclusion we desire to place on record our warmest thanks for the help which we have received from our Secretary, Mr. J. H. Sime, both in the course of the Inquiry and in the preparation of our Report.

James McBoyle (*Chairman*)
J. K. Bates
J. S. Campbell
Richard F. Dell
George D. Grant
James Kyle
James McNaught
Robert MacLeod
A. C. Smyth
Frank Magee
Geo. S. Thomson

J. H. Sime (*Secretary*)
30th March, 1967.

List of organisations and individuals who submitted evidence

Organisations:

Abertay Historical Society
 Association of County Councils in Scotland
 Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society
 British Records Association
 Church of Scotland
 Cowal Archaeological Society
 District Councils' Association for Scotland
 Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society
 Royal Burgh of Forfar
 Great North of Scotland Railway Association
 Historical Association in Scotland
 Kirkintilloch and District Society of Antiquaries
 Kirkwall Town Council
 Lorn Archaeological Society
 County Council of Orkney, Education Committee
 Orkney Record and Antiquarian Society
 Public Record Office
 St. Andrews Branch of the Historical Association in Scotland
 The Saltire Society
 Scottish Counties of Cities Association
 Scottish Genealogy Society
 Scottish History Society
 Scottish Library Association
 Scottish National Party
 Scottish Record Office
 Society for the Study of Labour History (Scottish Committee)
 Society of Archivists
 University of Strathclyde
 H.M. Treasury Organisation and Methods Division
 Wigtownshire Antiquarian and Natural History Society

Individuals:

T. R. Bone, M.A., Ed.B., Department of Education, University of Glasgow
 J. Brindle, B.Sc., F.L.A., County Librarian of Fife
 R. H. Campbell, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Economic History in the University of East Anglia
 Derek Charman, M.A., Archivist, Ipswich and East Suffolk Joint Record Office
 S. G. Checkland, M.A., M.Comm., Ph.D., Professor of Economic History and
 A. A. M. Duncan, M.A., Professor of Scottish History, University of Glasgow
 I. P. Collis, F.S.A., County Archivist, Somerset Record Office
 Dr. A. A. Cormack, Peterculter, Aberdeenshire
 N. Crawford, Librarian and Curator, Arbroath Public Library
 Miss Ida Darlington, M.A., F.S.A., Head Archivist, Greater London Record Office

Richard F. Dell, B.A., D.A.A., City Archivist of Glasgow Corporation
 Gordon Donaldson, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., Professor of Scottish History and
 Palaeography, C. P. Finlayson, M.A., Keeper of Manuscripts, H. J. Hanham,
 M.A., Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S., Professor of Politics, D. B. Horn, M.A., D.Litt.,
 Professor of Modern History, J. D. B. Mitchell, LL.B., Ph.D., Professor of
 Constitutional Law, and S. B. Saul, B.Com., Ph.D., Professor of Economic
 History (members of the staff of Edinburgh University)
 F. G. Emmison, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., County Archivist, Essex Record Office
 I. C. Freeman and C. P. A. Levein, Research Workers, Department of Geography,
 University of Edinburgh
 Miss M. Gollancz, M.A., County Archivist, Surrey Record Office
 Felix Hull, B.A., Ph.D., County Archivist, Kent Record Office
 D. L. G. Hunter, C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E., M.Inst.T., Howden, East Yorkshire
 B. C. Jones, M.A., Archivist to the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and
 the City of Carlisle
 Miss E. A. Liversidge, F.L.A., County Librarian for the County of Stirling
 The Lord Lyon King of Arms
 R. E. MacCallum, M.A., Ed.B., F.S.A.Scot., Forss, by Thurso
 E. MacGillivray, County Librarian of Orkney
 Professor J. D. Mackie, C.B.E., M.C., LL.D., H.M. Historiographer in Scotland
 R. B. Pugh, M.A., F.S.A., Institute of Historical Research, London
 Miss Elizabeth Ralph, M.A., F.S.A., City Archivist, Bristol
 E. H. Sargeant, F.L.A., County Archivist, Worcestershire Record Office
 G. G. Simpson, M.A., Ph.D., Edinburgh
 Robert M. Strathdee, F.L.A., County Librarian of Midlothian
 M. E. Taylor, A.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I., F.S.A.Scot., A.A. Diploma Planning, County
 Planning Officer of Fife
 A. E. Truckell, M.A., F.S.A.Scot., F.M.A., Curator of Dumfries Burgh Museum

Extracts from relevant Statutes

Education (Scotland) Act 1962

S.12

(1) It shall be lawful for the education authority of a county, as an ancillary means of promoting education, to make such provision of books by purchase or otherwise as they may think desirable, and to make the same available not only to the pupils attending schools, junior colleges or other educational establishments in the county, but also to the adult population resident therein.

(2) For the purposes of this section, an education authority may enter into arrangements with the managers of public libraries.

Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887

S.21

The committee shall manage, regulate, and control all libraries and museums established under this Act, or to which this Act applies; and shall have power to do all things necessary for such management, including the following powers; that is to say,

To appoint sub-committees of their own number:

To appoint a salaried clerk, and salaried librarians, officers, and servants to act during the pleasure of the committee, and to pay and dismiss them:

To purchase books, newspapers, reviews, magazines, and other periodicals, statuary, pictures, engravings, maps, specimens of art and science, and such other articles and things as may be necessary for the establishment, increase, and use of the libraries and museums under their control, and to do all things necessary for keeping the same in a proper state of preservation and repair:

To provide from time to time the necessary fuel, lighting, and other matters:

To sell or exchange any books, works of art, or other property of which there may be duplicates, provided that the money arising from such sale, and the property received in exchange shall be applied and held for the purposes of this Act:

To provide suitable rooms in the libraries within which the books, periodicals, and newspapers may be read:

To lend out, for the purpose of being read by the householders and inhabitants of the burgh or parish in and for which the committee has been appointed, the books of any library under their control, or such of them as they may consider proper; and at their discretion to grant the same privilege to the inmates of industrial schools, training ships, reformatories, barracks, and other similar institutions, established for or in the burgh or parish; and also to any person carrying on business within the limits of the burgh or parish, or to any employee engaged in employment therein, although such person or employee may not be a householder, and may not reside within such limits:

To compile and print catalogues of all or any books, articles, and things in the libraries or museums under their control, and reports of their proceedings, and to sell the same, the proceeds to be applied for the purposes of this Act.

